

FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM SADDLEWORTH & LEES LOCAL BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
26 JANUARY 2005**

PRESENT:

Councillor Brian Lord (Chair)
Councillor Val Sedgewick
Councillor John Hudson
Jean Bradley (Tenant Board Member)
Mary McLeverty (Tenant Board Member)
Edith Bentley (Tenant Board Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Housing 21
Jo Mills

First Choice Homes Oldham
Hugh Broadbent, Chief Executive
Rob Farnos, PFI Manager
Sue Walker, Board Support Officer
Huw Watkin, Area Building Surveyor
Nigel Devereux, Tenant Participation Officer
Peter Webb, Repairs & Renewals Division.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies had been received.

2. RATIFICATION OF NEW TENANT BOARD MEMBERS:

The board ratified the appointment of Mrs Edith Bentley and Mrs Mary Mcleverty as tenant board members of the Saddleworth & Lees local board

3. ANY ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

4. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY CONTRACT OR MATTER TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2004 be accepted as an correct record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

None

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:

The Chair requested that, given the large number of tenants that had attended the meeting regarding PFI, that item 7 and item 8 be taken together.

8. REPORT ON SHELTERED HOUSING PFI PROGRAMME FROM OLDHAM MBC, FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM AND HOUSING 21

Jo Mills representing Housing 21 attended the meeting to present a joint report on the sheltered housing PFI programme.

After outlining the content of the report, Jo informed the Board that a number of questions from tenants had been submitted in writing. She stated that responses to all questions would be provided via the PFI newsletter.

Questions were taken from tenants present at the meeting:

Q. Will we be able to return to our homes following the work?

In response Jo stated that for some schemes, Housing 21 are very confident that people will come back, however for schemes, it is not certain. For Old Mill House, we are worried that some people may have to leave altogether.

Q. How can we have a secure tenancy if our homes are being knocked down?

Rob Farnos responded: If the Council want to re-model homes we have a legal responsibility to find that tenant a new home and that is our legal obligation.

Q. Why are two bedroom flats being created?

Rob Farnos responded: So that relations can come to stay and for the comfort of couples, where they are unable to stay in the same room as one may be in ill health.

Q. Can we keep very new kitchens and bathrooms?

Jo Mills responded: There are further requirements we have to meet and where kitchens and bathrooms meet those, we will try to keep those but we will have to discuss this on an individual basis. In the event of not being able to keep them, there will be compensation.

Q. Nobody wants two bedroom properties, given that will the rents go up. Can we not reduce the number of two bedroom properties so that

more flats could be fitted in to the same space?

Jo Mills responded: We have done a full study of the demand for sheltered housing and overall, we will need less sheltered accommodation but more extra sheltered housing. The study has shown that we need that now and in the future. Old Mill House will remain as sheltered housing but will have extra facilities and care. This sort of sheltered scheme is working well in Keighley and we will organise a trip for tenants so that everyone is able to see how well it is working.

Q. Can we keep very new kitchens and bathrooms?

Hood Square is made of up of separate blocks of flats. Can we move out one block at a time?

Jo Mills responded: I have spoken with our Director of Development and Finance. It would take twice as long and cost twice as much and is therefore not possible.

Q. Will our belongings in storage be covered by insurance?

Jo Mills responded: Yes.

Q. When will this work start?

Jo Mills responded: We will start when we sign. The work is scheduled for 4½ years. Each scheme will take around 9 – 11 months to complete.

Q. Have you applied for planning permission for Hood Square?

Jo Mills responded: Yes

A member of the public introduced himself to those present as David McNeen from Chew Vale. He stated that he was house owner and that Chew Vale was a community and was concerned that a barrier (fence) had been planned for a 'turning head' close to his home and that that would have split that part of the community from the rest.

Further, he stated that he had written to Rob Farnos and had received a reply. The first notification was notice of a planning application from the Planning Department. A lot of people had put objections in but were informed that they were unable to put objections in about fencing. It was a delegated matter so the Planning Department could make the decision about it. He informed those present that concerned parties had asked two Councillors to call it to the Planning Committee and that he was now asking the Board whether there's was a chance it could go to the Planning Committee.

In reply, Rob Farnos stated that at the time of the consultation, an issue for some tenants had been security so we asked Housing 21 to increase security. Whilst we recognised that the barrier would be problematic and would need to be looked at, we do need to come back with an alternative that still meets residential aspirations in regard to security.

In response, David McNeen stated that this was a legal issue had some people had bought their properties based on the open land aspect.

Further questions were put forward to the Board and Officers in attendance:

Q. What are you going to do about those that are too frail to move?

Jo Mills responded: We have a lot of experience in moving elderly people. We will look at doing everything we can so that they don't have to do more than they have to do. Those people whose flats are staying are guaranteed to come back. We will talk to everyone individually.

Q. Will the Warden be staying here?

Jo Mills responded: They will be transferring across to Housing 21. The staff are staying on the scheme. Pam will continue to work here and will play a critical role.

There ended questions from tenants. In summarising, the Chair stated that, in including this item on the agenda, the Board was trying to ensure that Housing 21, FCHO and the Council was aware of tenant's concerns. He stated that there would be a progress report at the next public meeting of this Board.

9. RE-PROFILING OF SADDLEWORTH & LEES AREA CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND ESTATE BASED INVESTMENT PLANS 2004 – 2007:

Board Members considered a report of Huw Watkin, Area Building Surveyor on the re-profiling of Saddleworth & Lees Area Capital Programme and estate based investment plans.

Arising from the report, the Chair raised concern that, in his view, Estate Agents when requested to carry out a valuation, were pricing properties too low. He requested that this issue be referred to the Main Board.

10. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Sue Walker, Board Support Officer presented a report which sought approval for future meetings of the six Local Boards to be held within a 2-week window and to be held on a 6-weekly basis. She stated that, in planning future meetings within this 2-week window, it would promote a more efficient, streamlined decision making process.

Further, she stated that some future meetings would be centred on a single issue focus, primarily aimed at the Performance Contract, giving the Board an opportunity to focus on local performance issues.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations be approved.

11. BOARD MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Consideration was given to a report of the Board Support Officer regarding Board

Member attendance.

Sue Walker explained that poor attendance levels at meetings and Board development events were one of the biggest risks to FCHO's governance arrangements. The Local Board constitution was very clear on this issue and this report sought to clarify the powers of the Boards and would result in the development of an attendance protocol.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations be approved.

12. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS/TRAINING EVENTS

No items were forwarded.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 6 April 2005.

The Chair declared the end of the meeting at 10.27pm.